



Missing Pupil and Absconding Policy

Approved by:

M Phillips

Date: September 2026

Next review due by:

September 2027

Absconding is when a pupil goes beyond the fenced boundaries of the school, without permission. Due to the site complexities, this would be the car park areas, school buildings or field. Missing is when a pupil is still assumed on the school grounds but not visible.

Some of our pupils have difficulties managing their anxiety, and will often seek to abscond/hide because of their flight response whilst other pupils may abscond for attention. Often this will be for pupils to go to a place they feel safe or move to a position they can be in control of a situation.

In any circumstance, due to the vulnerable nature of our pupils, our policy will be followed by all staff to ensure that pupils are safeguarded at all times.

This policy will also be applicable if a pupil absconds or goes missing during an off-site activity/ trip.

Our pupils are supervised at all times within school. Some pupils will be aware of opportunities when they can abscond or go missing. For example going to the toilet, transitions and during break times when there is a lot of movement. Some pupils will also be aware of fire escapes that can be released and will let themselves out of the building. Some of our pupils would also be unaware and be explorative if they find an opportunity.

Within school, registers are taken every morning between 9.00 and 9.15 following arrival into school. Any absentees are followed up by phone call, if we have not already been informed by a parent/carer. A further register is taken in the afternoon once groups have returned from lunch.

It is the responsibility of the staff in each class to account for the whereabouts of their pupils.

Upon discovering a pupil is missing

- School staff to undertake an immediate search around any usual locations or safe spaces that pupil would tend to use. The search should not exceed 10 minutes and a member of SLT/office staff must be informed immediately.
- If they cannot be found, it must be assumed that they have absconded. In this situation, parents/carers/social worker (if applicable) are to be informed immediately and kept up to date with the process.
- Once the pupil has been missing for 20 minutes the police are to be called. This may vary depending on the circumstance and individual needs of the pupil (see below).

If a Pupil Absconds (observed)

- Staff to inform SLT/school office immediately
- Staff observing/supporting to take radios and mobile phone
- Where possible, a member of staff should follow (from a safe distance) the pupil/pupils, attempting to persuade them to come back onto site or keeping a safe eye on the situation
- Observing staff should note what they are wearing and any intentions of where they are going
- Request further staff, if required, to assist with the situation
- SLT or admin will inform parents/carers/ social worker and keep them updated.
- If the pupil is missing for 20 minutes without being sighted, or the situation becomes unsafe, the police are to be informed.

Individual Circumstances

The above protocol must be considered alongside the pupils' developmental level (age and maturity) and their emotional state.

For example, if a pupil has no road awareness or is a danger to themselves or others, physical intervention could be necessary to prevent the pupil absconding. If they did abscond, the police would be informed earlier due to the higher level of risk.

The response for older pupils who are able to keep themselves safe could be different again. Either way, parents/carers/social worker will always be informed as soon as possible, and a member of staff will follow to ensure safety.

In all events, the pupil's individual plan should be followed and updated. Any episodes of missing/absconding should be recorded on CPOMs and ensure all relevant professionals are informed.